BIG COMIC SUPERIOR

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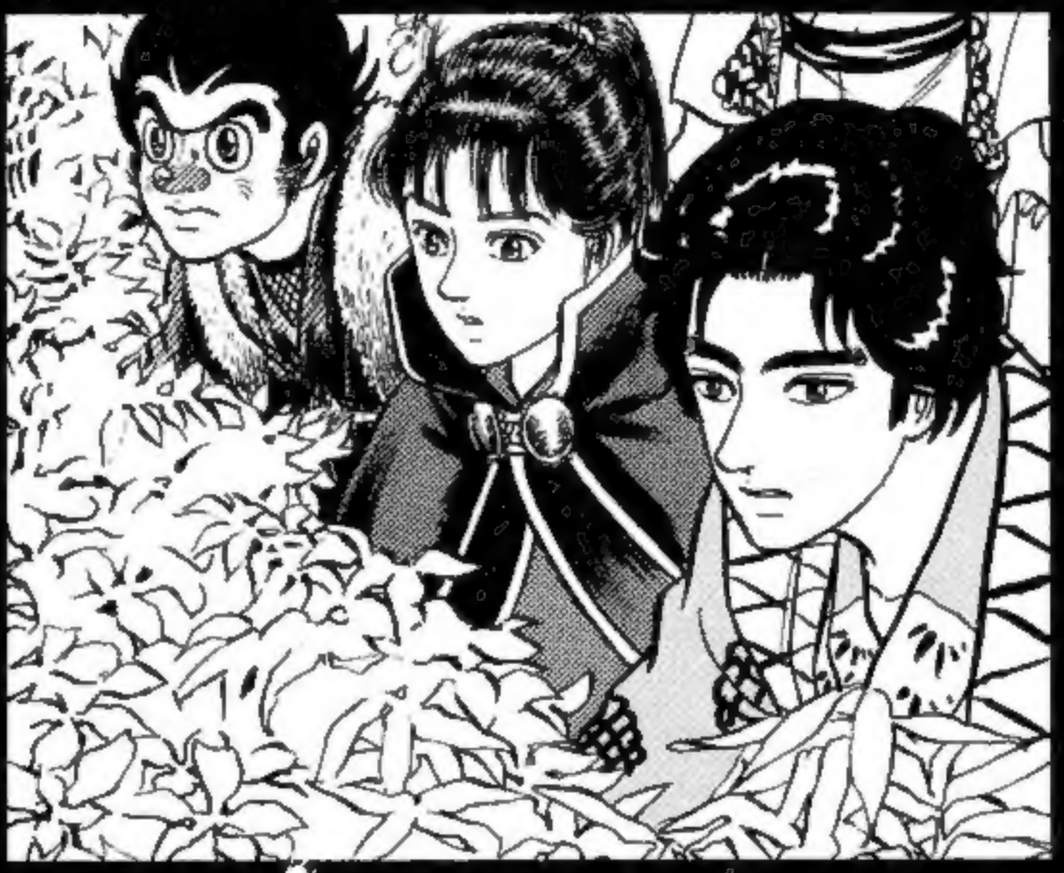

Azumi

24. Troubles

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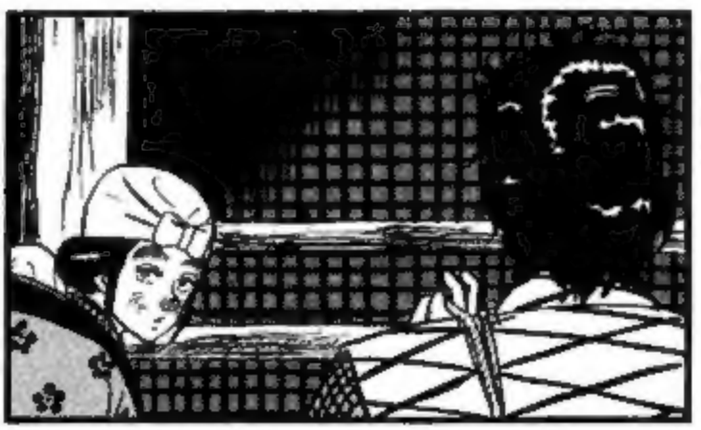
CHAPTER 1:
MUSASHI
APPEARS

HE'S HERE! IT'S THAT MAN!

THE YOUNG MAN MOVING TOWARD THE GATE NOW!

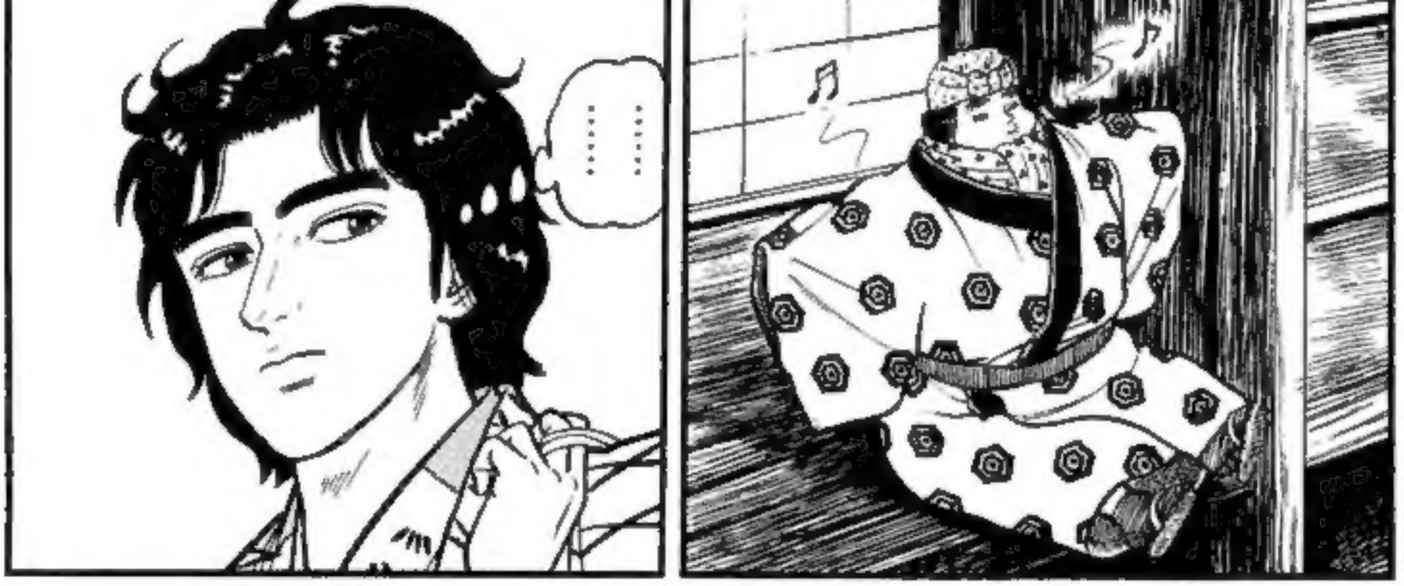
GOT IT!



HE SAW ME! I'M SURE HE SAW ME FOR AN INSTANT!
AND JUST WITH THAT, HE MUST'VE MEMORIZED ME, RIGHT!?
I WONDER IF IT'S TRUE...
BUT MORE THAN THAT... ISN'T HE SUCH A LADY-KILLER...?

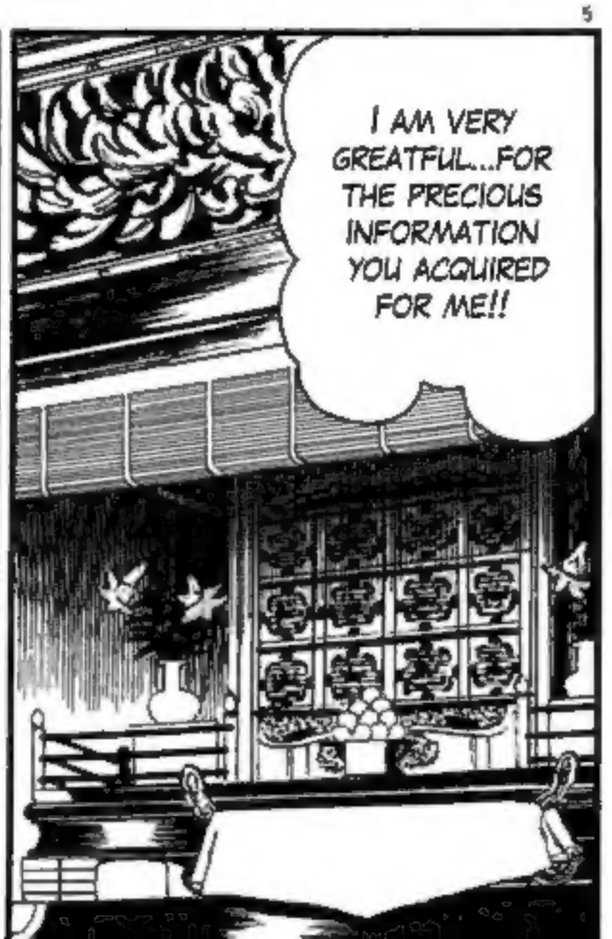
OUR EYES MET FOR AN INSTANT! HE WON'T HAVE ANY EXCUSE!
HE SAW ME!

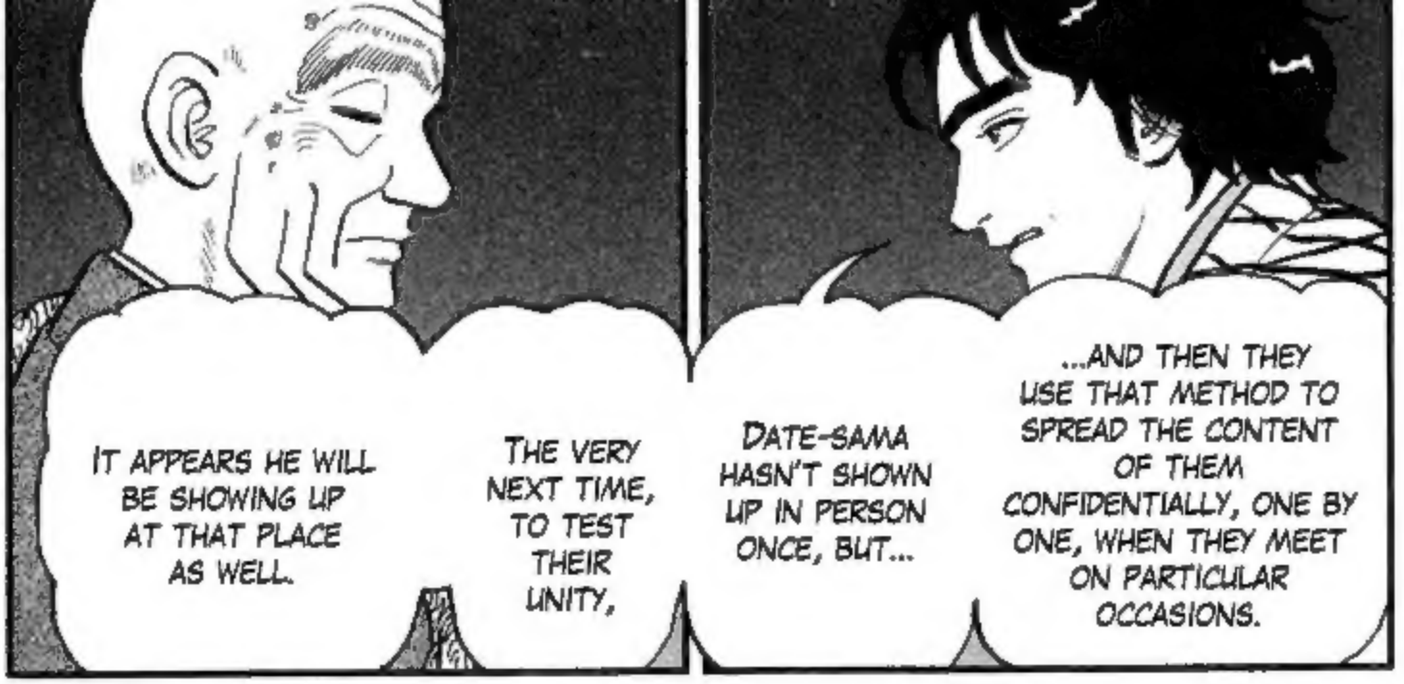
M-MORN-ING...
GOOD MORN-ING.



I'VE JUST RETURNED.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HARD WORK!

THEY RECEIVE SECRET MESSAGES FROM DATE MASA-MUNE.
SO FAR, THEY HAVE NEVER EVEN MET ONCE IN A BUILDING.

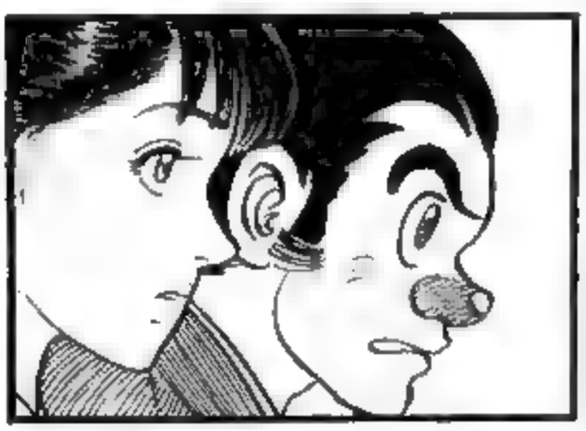

I AM VERY GREATFUL...FOR THE PRECIOUS INFORMATION YOU ACQUIRED FOR ME!!


IT APPEARS HE WILL BE SHOWING UP AT THAT PLACE AS WELL.
THE VERY NEXT TIME, TO TEST THEIR UNITY,
DATE-SAMA HASN'T SHOWN UP IN PERSON ONCE, BUT...
...AND THEN THEY USE THAT METHOD TO SPREAD THE CONTENT OF THEM CONFIDENTIALLY, ONE BY ONE, WHEN THEY MEET ON PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.

COME HERE.
YES.
SORRY TO IN-TRUDE.
WELL, I WILL INTRODUCE YOU TO THE COMRADES YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH!
HM!

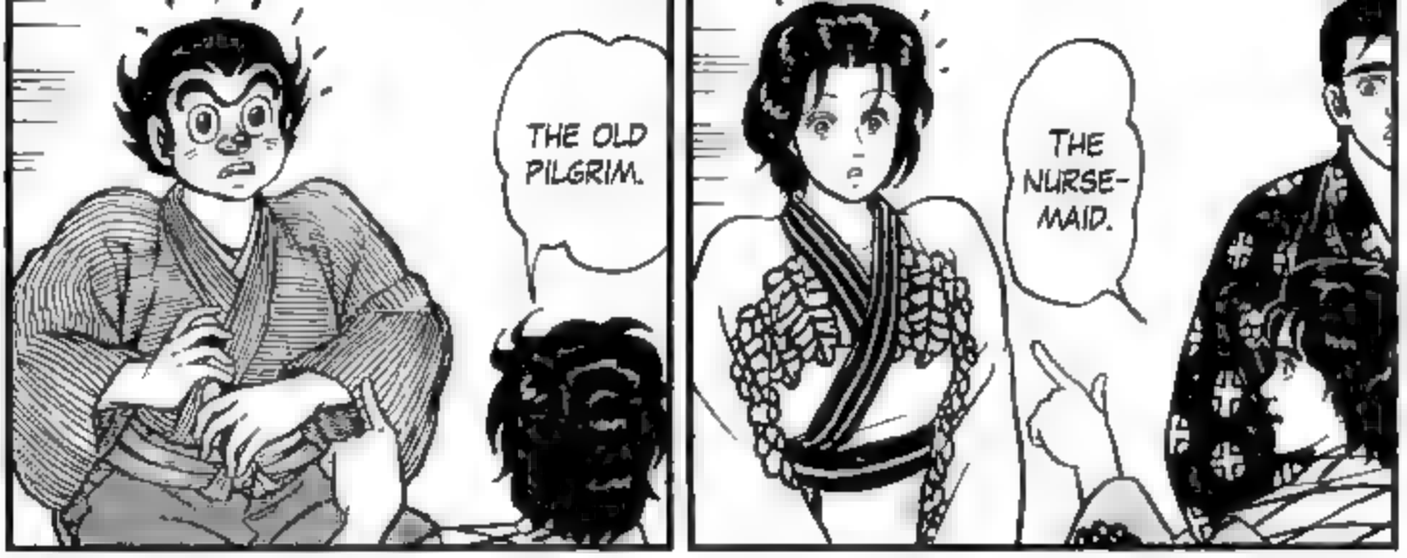
.....

HE CAUGHT WIND OF THIS PLOT AND HAS THE VITAL ROLE OF IDENTIFYING THE CONSPIRATORS!
PLEASE MEET HYŌSUKE! HE'S BEEN UNDERCOVER FOR SOME TIME!



BEING TESTED BY YOU ALL, WASN'T I?
AND I WAS
I AM HYŌSUKE.

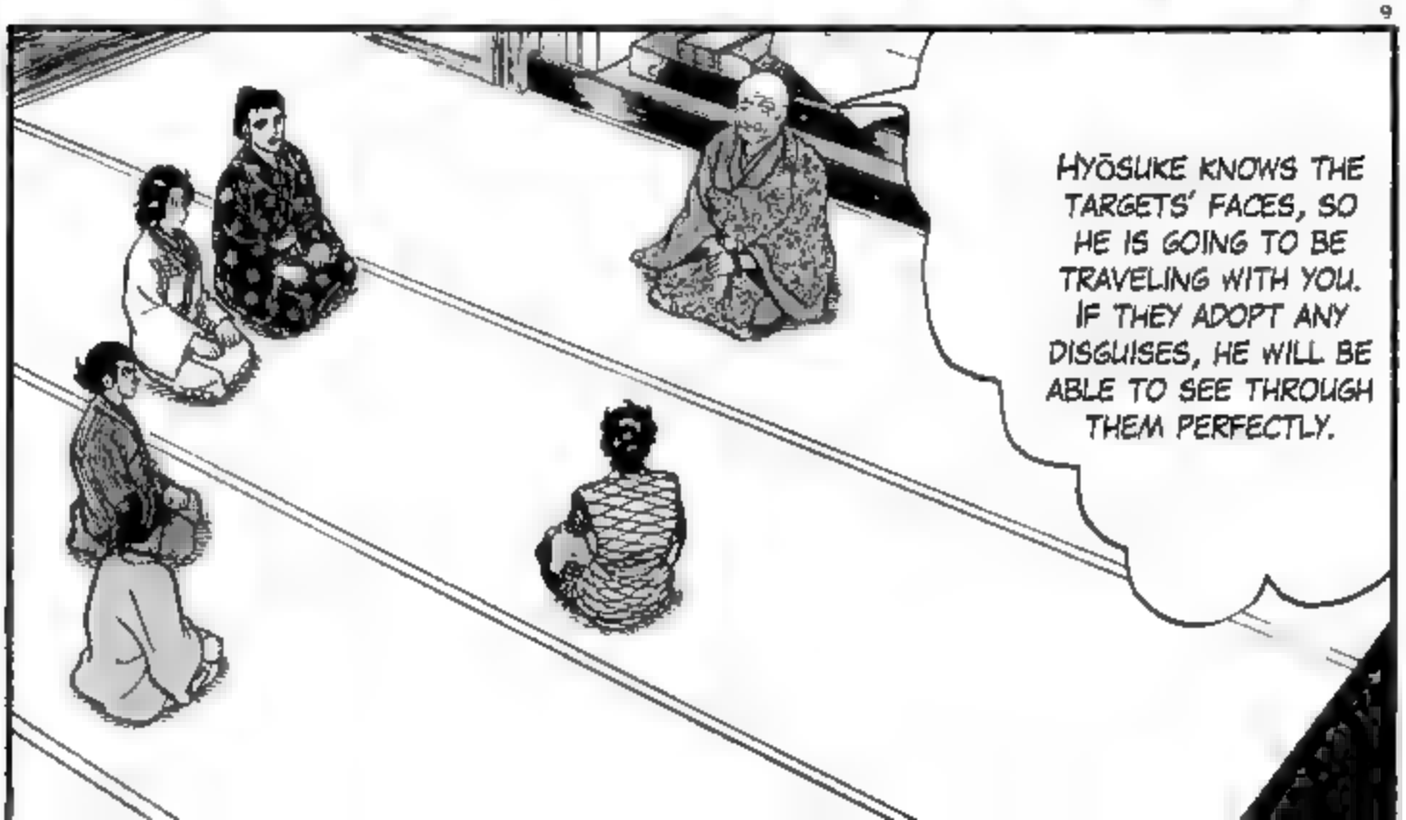
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?
TESTED!?
EH!?

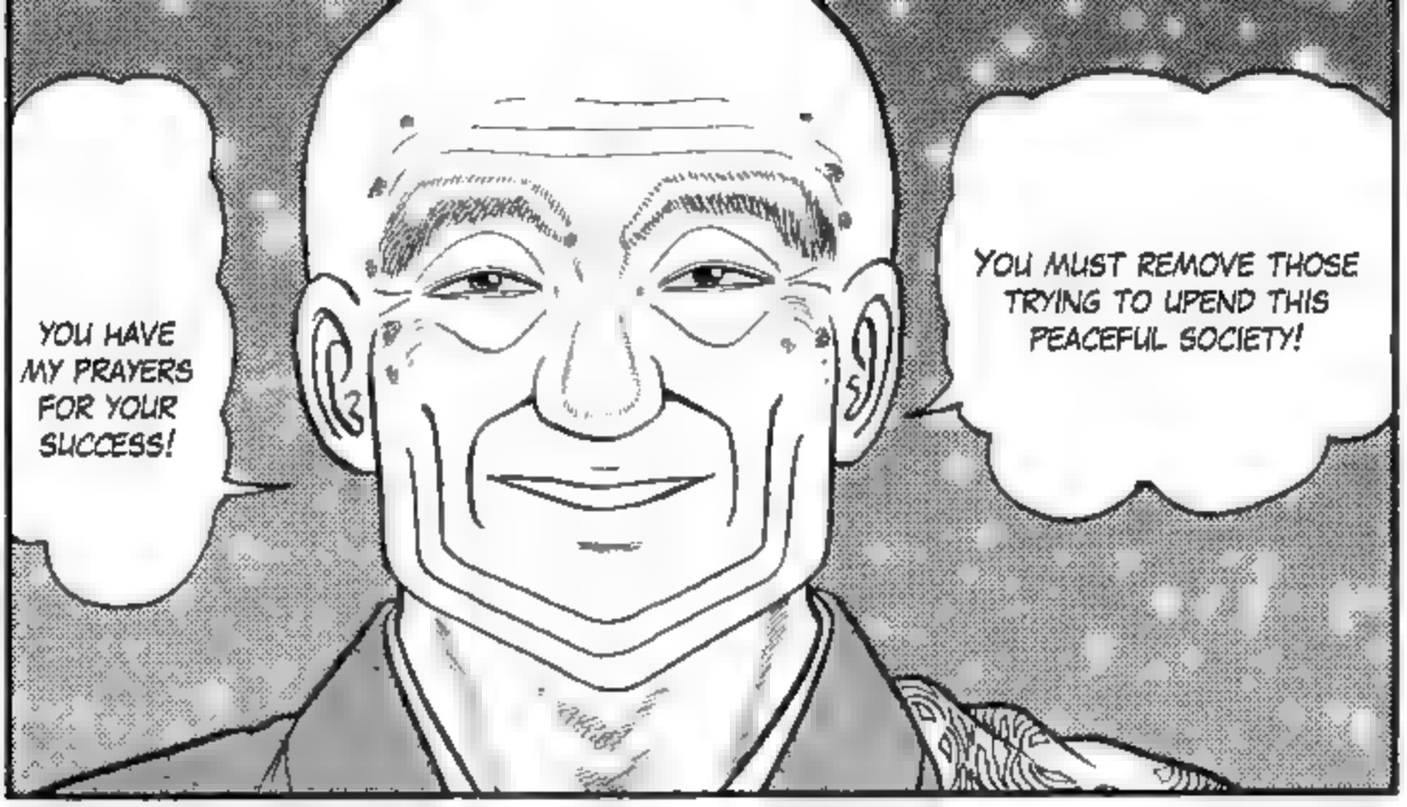

THE OLD PILGRIM.
THE NURSE-MAID.

AND THE ABSURDLY PUFFY WOMAN.
THE GARDE-NER.

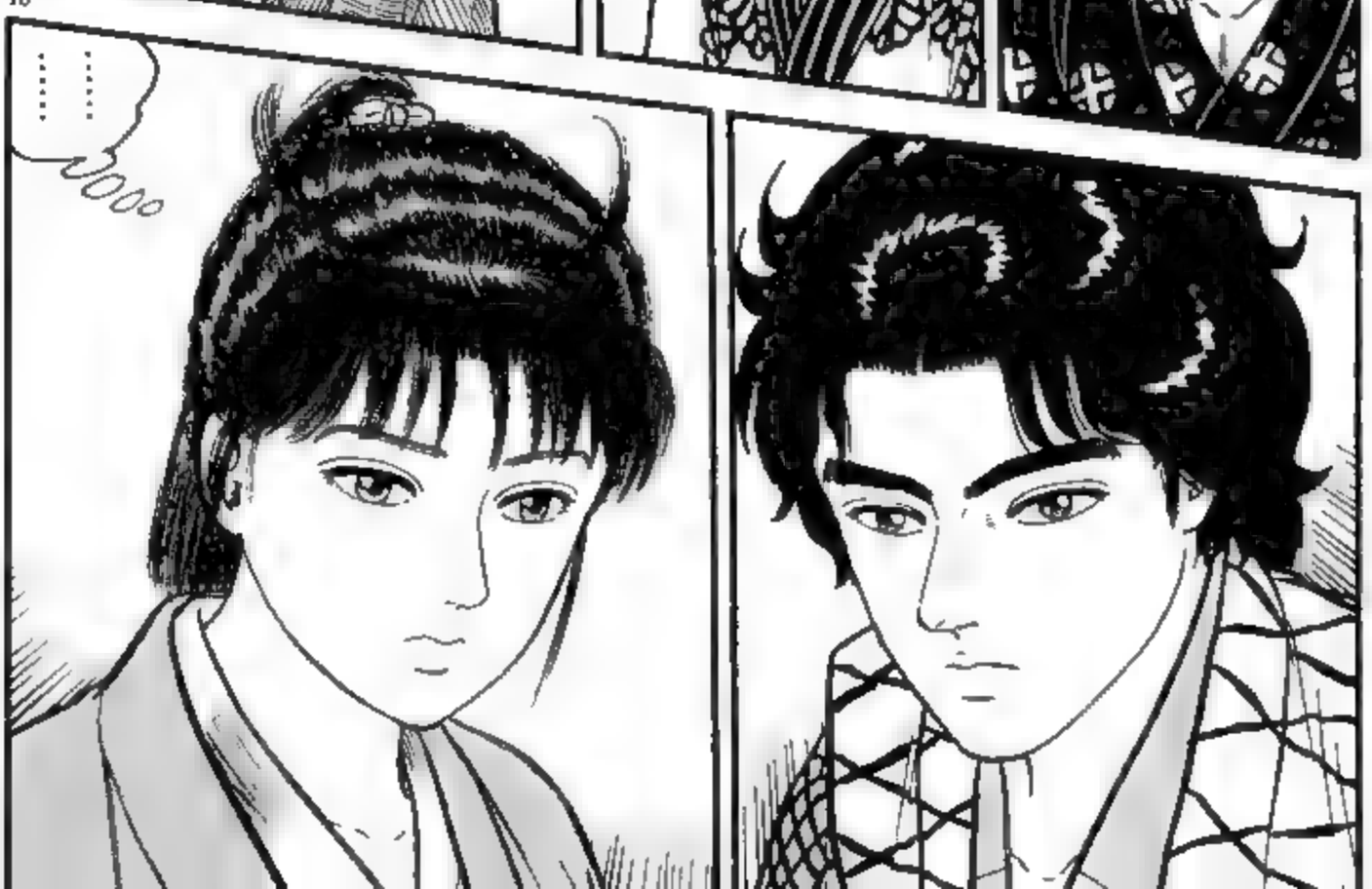
HOW DID YOU SEE THROUGH US!?!
HOW DID YOU KNOW!?

.....
.....
.....
.....
FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, I DON'T KNOW WHY THE OTHER PEOPLE CAN'T SEE THROUGH DISGUISES OF THAT LEVEL.
I GET IT ASKED OFTEN, BUT...I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT WELL...
NOW ABOUT THE MISSION YOU WILL BE COMPLETING FOR ME FROM THIS POINT ON...
HAHAHAHA! JUST WHAT DISGUISES DID YOU USE!? I'D HAVE LOVED TO HAVE SEEN!

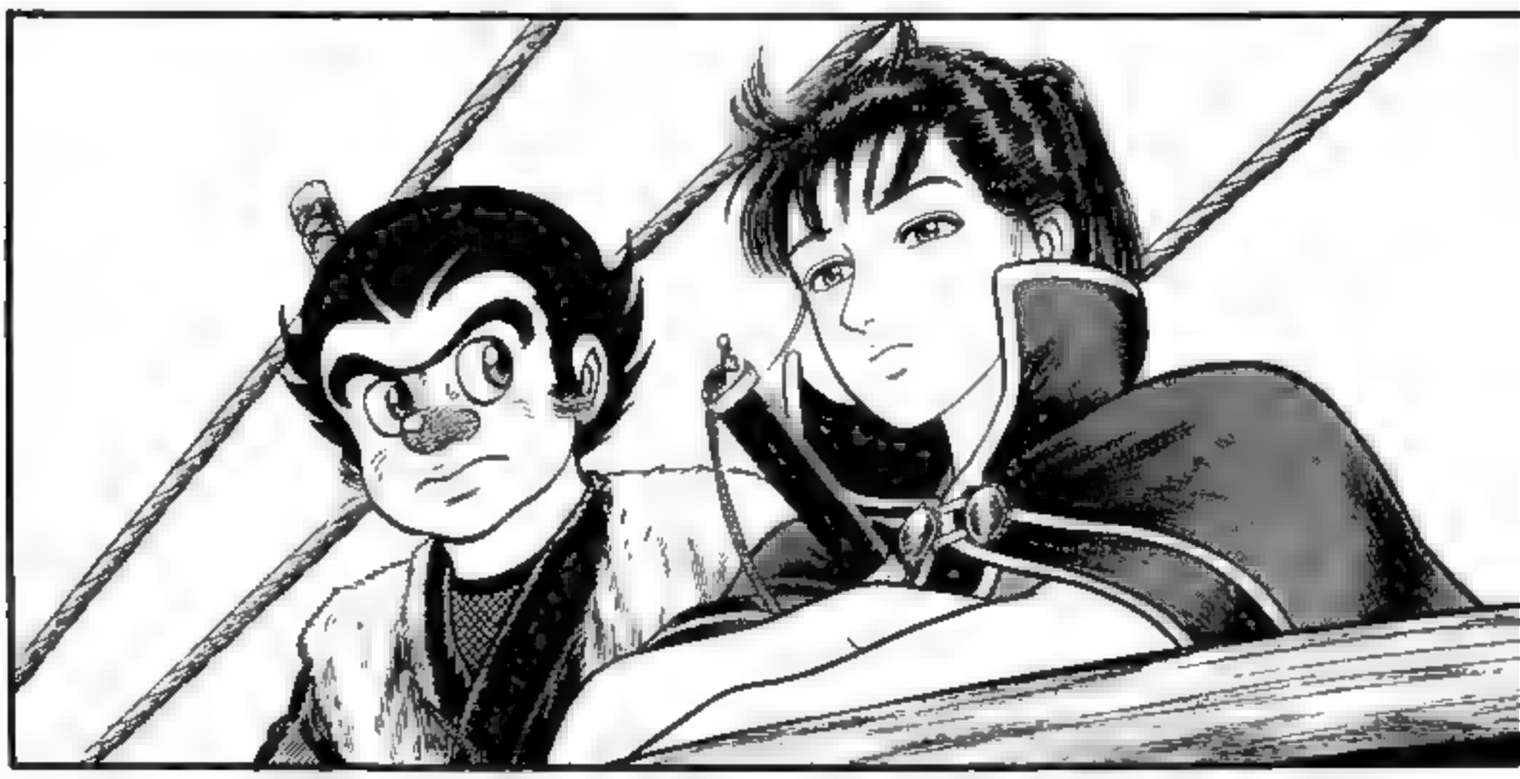

HYŌSUKE KNOWS THE TARGETS' FACES, SO HE IS GOING TO BE TRAVELING WITH YOU. IF THEY ADOPT ANY DISGUISES, HE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE THROUGH THEM PERFECTLY.


YOU HAVE MY PRAYERS FOR YOUR SUCCESS!
YOU MUST REMOVE THOSE TRYING TO UPEND THIS PEACEFUL SOCIETY!

SIR!
YES!


.....
Ooo

YEAH.
IT'S A BIT SURPRISING.
HE EVEN GOT SUCH A SHIP TO TRANSPORT US!



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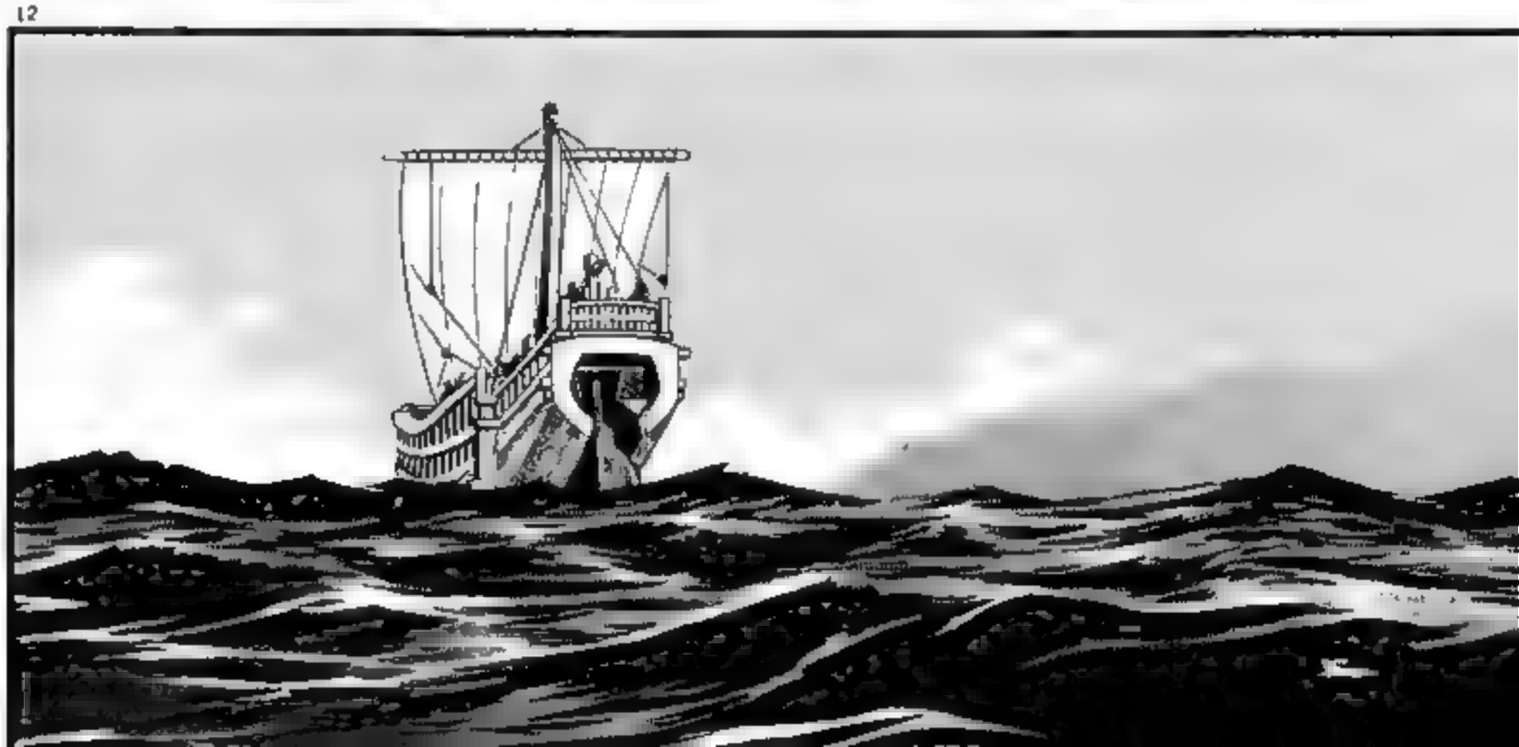
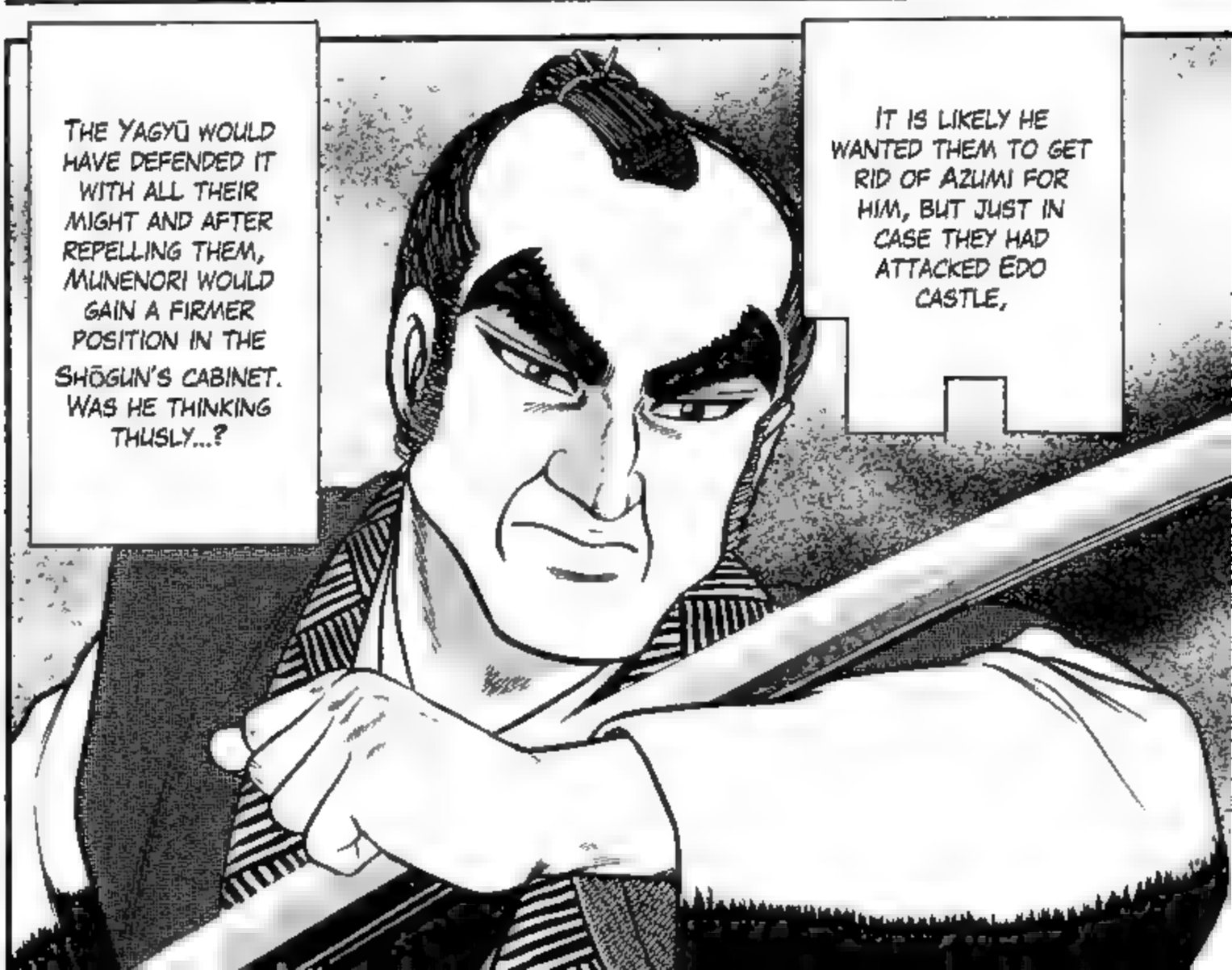


Azumi and the others' targets were thirteen men, including Date Masamune.
Two were daimyō, once chief retainers who had their ranks altered.
The other ten were chieftains of shinobi families.
Among those chieftains, there was one man who had connections with Yagyū Munenori.

That man, just before setting off, received a secret message from him.
In that message
It was written that the shogunate had already sensed their plan and that an assassin had been sent to that gathering place. There was even information written about the assassin, Azumi, along with her portrait.

SO HOW COULD MUNENORI, WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE, NOT INFORM THE SHŌGUN TO TAKE PRE-CAUTIONS?
HE WAS A MAN AFFILIATED WITH THOSE PLOTTING TO INFILTRATE EDO CASTLE AND ASSASSINATE PROMINENT MEN, STARTING WITH SHŌGUN HIDETADA...

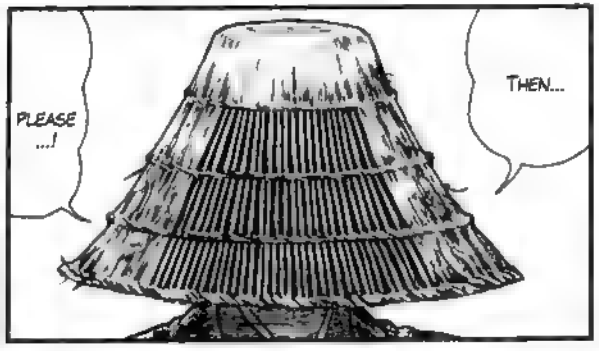

THE YAGYŪ WOULD HAVE DEFENDED IT WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT AND AFTER REPELLING THEM, MUNENORI WOULD GAIN A FIRMER POSITION IN THE SHŌGUN'S CABINET. WAS HE THINKING THUSLY...?
IT IS LIKELY HE WANTED THEM TO GET RID OF AZUMI FOR HIM, BUT JUST IN CASE THEY HAD ATTACKED EDO CASTLE,

HE'S OVER THERE! HE WAS CHALLENGED BY A MARTIAL ARTS MASTER !!!!
MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, YOU SAY!?!?! IS MIYAMOTO MUSASHI HERE!?

SIX YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE MUSASHI HAD DEFEATED SASAKI KOJIRŌ AT GANRYŪJIMA, AND HIS NAME WAS FAMOUS THROUGHOUT THE LAND.
IS MUSASHI REALLY HERE. ..?
UOOOOH!! WHAT KIND OF MAN IS THAT MASTER OF MARTIAL ARTS!? MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, I MEAN!

HE'S A GIANT.
IS THAT MIYAMOTO MUSASHI?
DON'T THROW AWAY YOUR LIFE!
IT'S NOT THAT KIND OF SOCIETY ANYMORE.
YOU WON'T FIND THE SAMURAI SERVICES YOU HOPE FOR.
EVEN IF YOU BEST ME FOR YOUR REPUTATION,
I'M JUST SAYING THIS, BUT...
FACE ME!!!!
GRRR! SHUT UP!

!!


PLEASE ...!
THEN...

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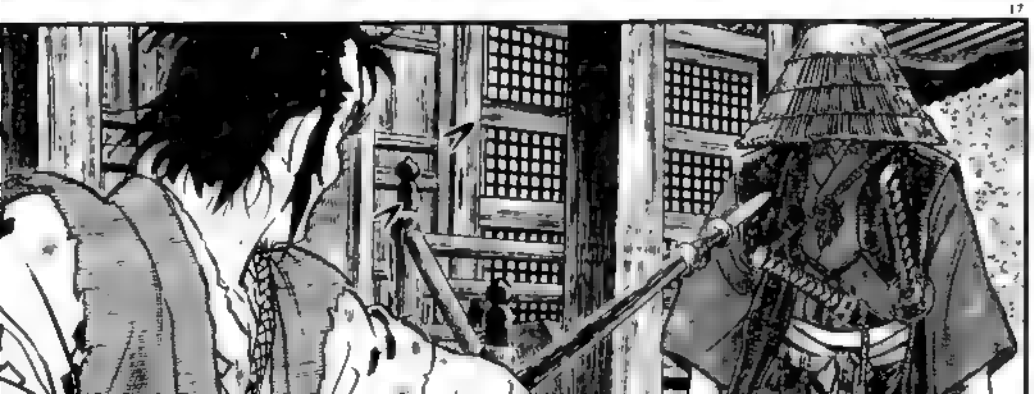

IF I CAN HAVE ONE SERIOUS DUEL WITH MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, I'LL BE SATISFIED!
NOW COME AT ME!
WALKED THE PATH OF MARTIAL ARTS WITH UNWAVERING DETERMINATION!
I'M A MAN WHO
EVEN IF I GET NO SERVICE,

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HE'S FAIRLY BROKEN.

HAAAAH!

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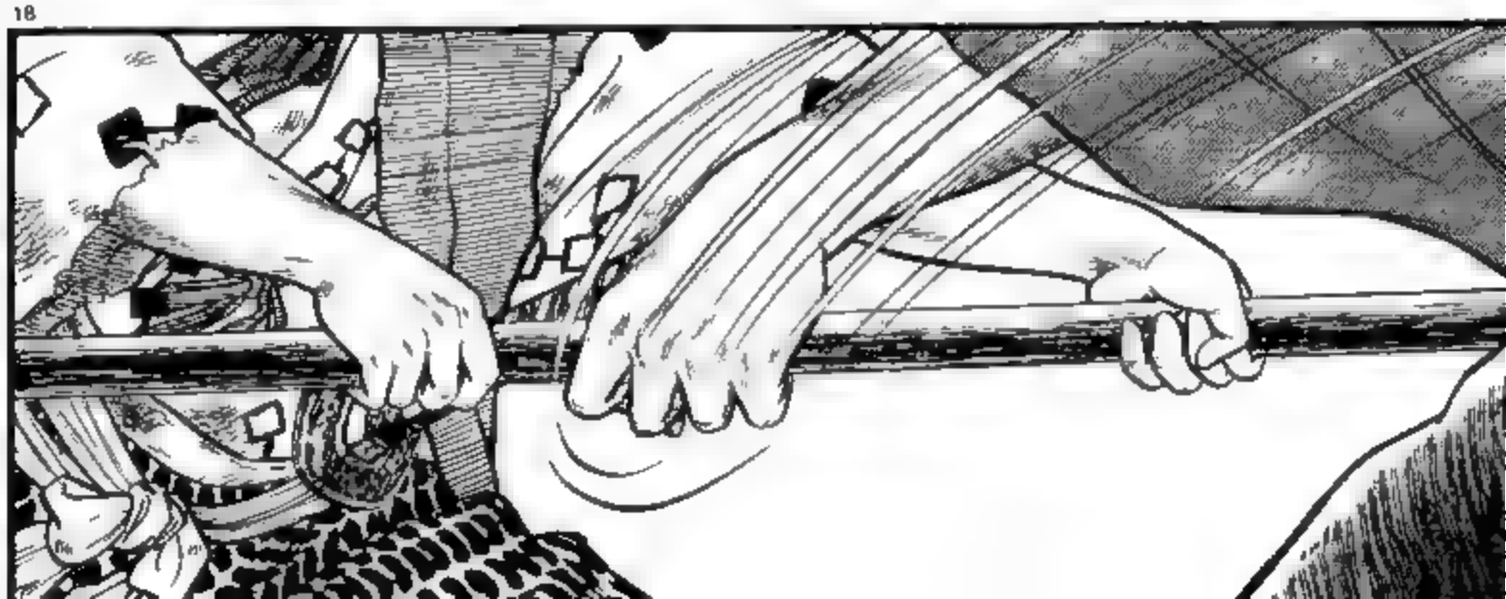

HOLD THIS WELL IN YOUR MIND AND CONTINUE... MAKING A SUCCESFUL PATH WITH YOUR MARTIAL ARTS!!

THUD OOOH!! ACK!!

THE FAMOUS MIYAMOTO MUSASHI.
I SEE.
HE HAS A SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH THAT SURPASSES BY FAR THAT OF A COMMON MAN...AND EVEN THOUGH...
EVEN WHEN NOT USING HIS FAMED TWO-SWORD STYLE.

WE'RE MEN WHO EARNESTLY IMPROVED OUR BUJUTSU...SO WHY, WHY MUST WE LIVE AT ONLY THE BARE LEVEL OF SUBSISTANCE!?
IT'S THE SAME FOR US AS WELL!
REALLY! WHAT A SOCIETY THIS HAS BECOME!
EVEN THOUGH HE'S SO SKILLED AND HAS SUCH A HIGH REPUTATION, HE'S NOT EMPLOYED BY THE SHOGUNATE...

SHOULD I DO THE SAME...?
OH...IS MUSASHI GOING FOR A REST THERE?

ACCURSED TOKUGAWA SHOGUN-ATE!
WATCH OUT. WE'RE GOING TO MAKE YOU PAY...

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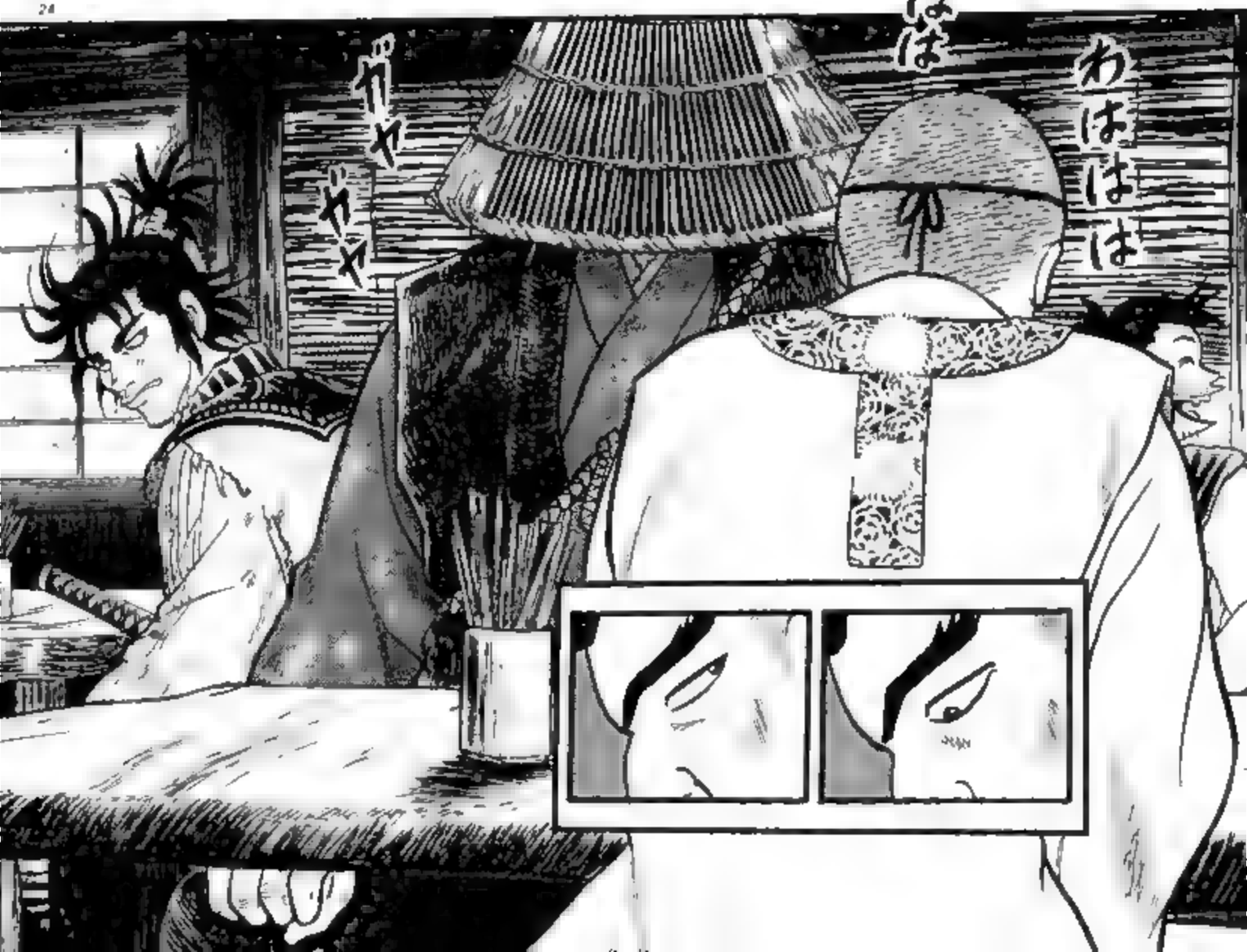
A CHANCE MEETING... MIYAMOTO MUSASHI!
IF I DEFEAT HIM I COULD BECOME FAMOUS WITH A SINGLE SWOOP!
I COULD STARE BACK AT ALL THOSE JERKS FROM MY VILLAGE!
AND HAVE MY REVENGE!
……

WEL-
COOOO
OOOME!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.....
IS AZUMI!?
NO WAY. THAT YOUNG GIRL...
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THE SHOGUN-ATE ASS-ASSIN YAGYŪ-SAMA WARNED ME OF.
NO MISTAKING IT...SHE'S AZUMI.

IS SHE HERE TO KILL ME?
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IS THIS A COIN-CIDENCE?
NO... WAIT.
AZUMI COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE DISCOVERED HOW I LOOK SO QUICKLY...

AH, RIGHT!
IT COULD EVEN BE SAID THAT LUCK IS ON MY SIDE! I FOUND THE ENEMY FIRST!
THAT'S RIGHT!!...THIS IS NEAR OUR GATHERING PLACE...IT'S A COINCIDENCE, A CHANCE MEETING WOULDN'T BE IMPOSSIBLE...

I'VE HEARD THE RUMORS ABOUT AZUMI.
THE YOUNG GIRL WHO SINGLEHANDEDLY DISPATCHED DOZENS OF YAGYŪ...AND WHO ALL ON HER OWN DESTROYED SIXTY NOBUSERI WHO HAD TAKEN OVER A POST TOWN!
A REMARKABLY SKILLED ASSASSIN.
I'D BE NO MATCH FOR HER IN A DIRECT CONFRONTATION.
THEN... NOW, SINCE SHE KNOWS NOTHING OF ME!
IT COULD BE THE PERFECT CHANCE!
IF I DON'T KILL HER, IT'D BE A FOOLISH WASTE!
I SHOULD KILL HER NOW! IN THIS PLACE! WITH A SURPRISE ATTACK!
ドドド

THERE'S NO WAY I CAN DEFEAT THIS MONSTER MUSASHI FROM THE FRONT!
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